

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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John Simpson: I think, Lord Gowrie, the problem in that process is not that the process will be undertaken, there's no doubt, but that it's incapable of being judged from outside the system. No-one can read the report of the Director of Public Prosecutions other than the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Lord Gowrie: Well, I think at some points in society you have to trust your institutions. I think it is reasonable to say we don't always give unconditional trust to institutions where they are politically directed or motivated and therefore in Britain, and indeed south of the border as well, we have an independent judiciary and the Director of Public Prosecutions is a wholly independent figure and I don't think anybody, certainly not John Hume, is casting the last aspersion on the ..... and I certainly wouldn't wish to do so.

John Simpson: Isn't it, though, a major point that when the leader of the main party - they are representing the mainly Catholic community - takes the view that there is something wrong, isn't it sufficiently strong coming with that voice?

Lord Gowrie: Well, of course I regret very much any death in the community and the fact that somebody has committed, or indeed is in the process of committing a heinous crime, does not in my view, and does not indeed under the law, justify in any way their being killed. They would be killed if the security forces may reasonably infer that there is a threat to their own lives and the lives of the men under their command and this is widely accepted both in Great Britain in the happily, rarer incidence in which this occurs and here and indeed in the Irish Republic as I well know. This is accepted, I think everywhere. What I am concerned about is that there should be any misunderstanding on the part of anyone about whether we can control our policy, saying "now there's a shoot-to-kill policy, now there isn't a shoot-to-kill policy". We have no such powers whatsoever. Any changes of policy of that kind would have to be done by primary legislation. We would have to bring in laws through Parliament quite openly which change the policy ..... All individuals - you, me or the security forces - are subject to the common law.

John Simpson: Well can I press you one step further on that? Obviously, if someone's life is threatened and arms are being used against them your case will probably be accepted and I think



John Hume has accepted that case this morning, but if a vehicle goes through a checkpoint without injuring anyone are the security forces then to be said their lives are in danger from a vehicle that has already passed them?

Lord Gowrie: Well, of course it's easy for you and me and indeed for John Hume sitting in a comfortable studio to be wise after the event. As we know, we are all grown-up people, work against terrorist incidents on whatever side proceeds by way of information and most of the people whom the security forces are investigating at any given moment are pretty well known and while there is no success in security policy while a single incident remains, nevertheless in recent years the security forces have been pretty successful at mopping up most of the periphery of terrorists. We are now left with what I call the A - level brigade and the people that are being proceeded against or have been proceeded against in recent incidents are certainly thought to have been known terrorists or terrorists known to have been involved in violent crime and possibly have been engaged in pursuing violent crime at the time. Now, faced with threats of that kind, obviously the security forces are armed and obviously they may make the reasonable inference that they are under threat. As I've said the guarantee ..... is that an independent person, the Director of Public Prosecutions does look at all incidents which involve serious injury or death and I have every confidence in that system. I would like to remind people that we don't often give much publicity to the occasions on which the security forces are themselves brought before the courts .....

John Simpson: I think some people would say that was fairly rare.

Lord Gowrie: Well, it does occur. I mean, I understand that some members of the security forces are shortly coming before the courts on very serious charges at the moment. Obviously I can't comment on individual cases but that is my advice and certainly I would remind the security forces in turn that they like all of us are subject to the law and that remains the position.

John Simpson: And you say that as a result of the recent group of cases that this has been the subject of a special request from you to the Chief Constable that he should complete investigations quickly?



Lord Gowrie: I have asked him, knowing how stretched he is and how busy he is and making every allowance, I have asked him if he would see that the reports reach the DPP as soon as possible and he is absolutely .....

John Simpson: If we can move from the issue of security and take it in the wider consequences, one of the obvious issues as the year ends is that the troubles in Northern Ireland and that essentially mean the fact that we are a violent society - has begun to affect people's livelihoods, have begun to effect jobs, unemployment is as high as it is. Until you can get security under control is there any hope for the economy?

Lord Gowrie: Well, I'm glad ..... I'm glad that you make that connection because I think that too few people do. The Northern Ireland economy in this national and international recession and given big changes in textiles, shipbuilding and the rest in the western world would be having a lot of difficulties in any case but what worries me is that as we move out of national and international recession, and it is of course slower than any of us would like, but as we move out of it, and we will, the Northern Ireland economy is going to be left behind in the bad old position because of the troubled image of the province and it is quite clear in my own mind that the Northern Ireland economy will continue to deteriorate unless there are political accommodations between the Loyalist and Nationalist communities, unless they learn to live together and I'm also quite clear that it will deteriorate unless there is a political settlement of the issues of identity and allegiance, those issues which, as we all know, the paramilitary groups can exploit or try to settle by violent means and that's the reason we are trying to get some political movement going and we are cautious in any claims for it, but some political movement going within the province and also of course within the totality of relations between the province, the Republic and the United Kingdom sovereign Government at Westminster.

John Simpson: Of course if you look at, you say bring the communities together, enabling them to live together, ninety percent or more of the people in Northern Ireland can probably live together quite adequately. The only answer that will enable the men of violence to live together are, in fact, mutually inconsistent



answers - a united Ireland or a guarantee of a non-united Ireland and men of violence are committed to those extremes.

Lord Gowrie: Well, let me therefore qualify that a little bit. Perhaps I used the phrase too loosely when I talked about living together, Of course I'm aware that the vast majority of people in the province wish to live together in peace but what we have seen - I'm not now talking about violence or the security issue - but what we have seen is the breakdown of the political process and, as you know, the Government's view is that direct rule ought to have ..... a temporary expedient, that it is not wholly satisfactory and that there must be more internal accountability and legitimate political activity in the province. Now, that is difficult, much harder today because of these issues of identity and allegiance. For instance, Nationalists here are a considerable body of people and body of views to have a legitimate interest in their relations with the Republic. Unionists here are the significant majority. They are significant enough to want, in my view, something approaching a permanent guarantee of their position in the United Kingdom and this is the kind of situation which simply does not exist in any other province in Europe and certainly not on the mainland and this is often widely misunderstood and that is why any movement towards any settlement here is going to be a rather funny kind of thing. It is going to be what I call a quarrel arrangement. I like to think of it as a triangle. You can't do it on an all-Ireland basis and you can't do it on a purely British basis. You have to do it in terms of a triangle, the base being the sovereign Government at Westminster and in Dublin and the apex being here in Belfast and one of the things we have sought to try and see created with the Assembly elections and the restoration of more representative political activity in the province is the apex of that triangle.

John Simpson: But that comes back of course to the, I think a phrase which you used on previous occasions, that people living in Northern Ireland who regard themselves as Irish might live in situations administered by Ireland and Britain with joint influence on what happens in Northern Ireland. I think it almost raises as many problems as it solves.

Lord Gowrie: Well you see it happens to some degree now, doesn't it, because if you go back to my immediate areas of responsibility, security, the security forces know better than anyone that their



activities are wholly dependent on their cooperation with the Security forces south of the border. It's a very major mistake to try to pretend that its otherwise. Of course all aspects of this problem have to be sorted out in a plural way.

John Simpson: Can you take the one instrument of that attempt towards a plural separate institutions, the Assembly. The Assembly, it has been elected, it's functioning. I don't know whether its fair to say it's functioning on three cylinders, or functioning on three-and-a-half cylinders but it's not functioning on all cylinders in the way in which the Secretary of State and yourself would have hoped when the Assembly was being elected. Now, has it passed the stage where you think it's passed the initial test of credibility or are you disappointed so far?

Lord Gowrie: Well, one of the things that I think has been hardest for us, the Secretary of State and myself since we came here, is the level of expectation on both sides of the community that in some way the British Governments can get our of their machine and settle the whole issue. Extreme Republicans say the British can settle the issue by leaving. Extreme Unionists say the British Government can settle things by ..... and neither of these positions are realistic. What we have sought to try to explain is that it is the people of Northern Ireland who really have to do the hard legwork of achieving a political settlement and obviously we will try to ..... we will give every aid and help that we can and I was ..... that the major constitutional Nationalist party, the SDLP, are not participating in the Assembly. I'm not particularly surprised and I was rather doubtful that they ever would but I certainly regret that they are I hope that they will reconsider it but what is important is that it is possible now for the Nationalist community in Northern Ireland to go out and vote for parties and parties change their positions from time to time. Sometimes they lead public opinion and sometimes they are affected by it. This is part of the process under which we all live and therefore limited though the development is, I do think that it is better in 1982/83 that we have some forum for political activity in the province than it was when our only place of activity was ..... massive demonstrations marching up and down .....



John Simpson : Well, of course the SDLP -you say you almost anticipated they might not go there -would you criticise them because they are not helping you to form the apex of that triangle you were talking about, would you say that this is a fault on their part in their appreciation of what the Assembly can do?

Lord Gowrie: I don't think it's my business to criticise people in Northern Ireland. I am a functionary sent by the British Government to govern. I find that an unsatisfactory arrangement and I'm sure many people in Northern Ireland do. What I would like to see is political movement occurring within the province so that within the overall context of the United Kingdom and within the plural relations : that I mentioned earlier ordinary life and ordinary accountability and activity can occur again and if you say, many people say security is the key issue, let me remind you that our advice from the security forces all the time is that we must isolate the terrorist from his..... that unless the people who believe, who have certain political convictions are able to express them the terrorist will always be able to exploit the situation.

John Simpson: But then you go on and you take what I,if can now interpret to be, a very passive attitude to that very process so that you say it is not for you to criticise a political party for not playing its part in the institutions which the Government have created. Can you really be so passive?

Lord Gowrie: I don't think that's an issue of passive because the SDLP is not refusing to play its part simply because of irritation with the Government. It is not playing its part because it does not feel that the Unionist community has made sufficient overtures to it. I would think that the SDLP would only go into the Assembly when the Unionist members of the Assembly or a majority of them really actively seek to promote participation.

John Simpson: Well then is that an implied criticism of the Unionists in the Assembly? Are you saying they are not active enough in making that invitation?



Lord Gowrie: Well, I've talked to many of them and I think they would like to see the SDLP participating but as I say, you can take horses to water but you can't make them drink and that really is a description of the Government.

John Simpson: Your metaphor is causing me difficulty because I don't know how to interpret horses and drinking water. There are situations where there are two groups who basically need someone to give both of them a push. I think many people would see it that way and if you're not prepared to push either of them?

Lord Gowrie: You can push people in certain ways but can't push people electorally. One of the difficulties in Northern Ireland is that people campaign at times of election on very absolutist positions, much more absolutist positions than they campaign in Britain ..... but that makes it very difficult for the ordinary accommodations which are so necessary especially with <sup>low pressure?</sup> communities to be made. Now as things develop, as, after all we've had no political stability here of any consequence for ten years, as things develop I hope that normal political patterns and moulds will be established but I don't think the Government can sit in Stormont Castle and arrange for those accommodations to be made by .....

John Simpson: Well, do you think that you are talking about isolating the terrorists from the community - do you see in the development of Sinn Fein as a political party alongside the other aspects where the connections with violence or implied connections in support of violence, now do you see that as being a step in the direction of politicising the Provos?

Lord Gowrie: Well, of course, I welcome any group of people, however much I disagree with them, pursuing the political process though one is in the cage of Sinn Fein highly suspicious, to put it mildly, as to whether the politicisation is complete. I for one certainly doubt it but there is nothing new about Sinn Fein or an absolutist Republican view in the context of Ireland, North or South. I would remind you that the first woman to be elected to the British Parliament was a member of Sinn Fein and that before Jim Prior or I arrived here two



people were sent to the House of Commons by Sinn Fein - Sinn Fein represents the hardline, extreme position of Republican opinion and it will certainly continue to exist just as extreme Unionist or Protestant groups will continue to exist.

John Simpson: Is your position, though, that being elected that you would wish that they would attend the Assembly?

Lord Gowrie: Well, I think, the issue with Sinn Fein is very much different from the issue of the SDLP. The issue with Sinn Fein is that we would want from them and I think the whole community would want an absolute commitment to legitimate politics and a ringing refusal to endorse illegitimate politics and that they have refused to do.

John Simpson: They would say they were endorsing what they see as legitimate politics.

Lord Gowrie: Well, I don't see this conflict as being an armed struggle against the British crown. That is much too simplistic a view to hold ..... leaves out the fact that a fifth of the population of the people who live in Ireland wish to retain their connection with the British crown and even in Sinn Fein's own terms that is much too sizeable a minority to discount it in the way they do.

John Simpson: Trying to anticipate the way they would see it, they would agree that what you have done is you're allowed that twenty percent on the island as a whole to impose a veto where the eighty percent would wish something else. Their argument is that the British Government has entrenched a Unionist veto over political progress.

Lord Gowrie: Well, I think Unionists argue to us that we have entrenched a Nationalist veto over the political process and in fact both sides effectively have a veto and that is why we move along by making politicians come to terms with the realities of the situation in looking for plural solutions and meanwhile we have to exercise our job of providing as good government as we can. That government will never be properly done unless we restore political accountability.



John Simpson: Do you think the Assembly can go on indefinitely without, for example, the SDLP?

Lord Gowrie: Well, you see the SDLP have stood for election and have been elected. The important thing for me is the election. The institution is important but is less important in my view than the electoral process. Out of elections institutions emerge and develop. I think the Assembly is the appropriate institution and I would feel that it will emerge ..... it's already done reasonably well ..... Certainly the SDLP have an interest in that process and if they won't deal with me in the context of the Assembly they can come and deal with me as elected representatives in my office. So we have got some political movement going and that is a, it is a modest one, it's one step forward.

John Simpson: Before we leave the issue of the Assembly, let me give you one - supposing that the Assembly committee on the groups you are talking to, the Assembly a whole present to you the plan by the trade unionists to spend on extra £750m out of your finance portfolio in order to create 40,000 jobs, what can you say to reassure them?

Lord Gowrie: Well, I don't want to anticipate that until I see them, if I may. I think it would be wrong to jump the gun on their investigations but what I can say is that I will listen to any representations they have to make very carefully and I will see that ..... that I have to make so that they will see the constraints under which we are all having to work in this wretched national and international recession.

John Simpson: I wonder if we might move to the way in which Northern Ireland issues relate to national issues, to the United Kingdom Government and through that to the Irish position. We've recently had an election in the Republic of Ireland and of course the Government has changed there and I think the Secretary of State has said he is looking forward to an improvement in relations with the Government in Dublin. Do you see scope now for an enhanced and a quicker dialogue with the Dublin Government?



Lord Gowrie: I think given the problem facing the Dublin Government and given the deterioration of relations over the Falklands crisis this will be slow, slower than I personally would like but nevertheless I think an improvement will take place and I think it must take place. The difficulty in the province is that a dialogue between London and Dublin is always thought to be a dialogue with the ultimate aim of allowing Dublin to take over the province. No matter how much we deny it, it is never believed. The reason it is never believed is that some politicians, ..... and politically, in my view, have a vested interest in keeping this hoary old chestnut alive and they think ..... but what is certain is that it is foolish to think that the Republic has no legitimate interest in the affairs of the Nationalist community in Northern Ireland who primarily see themselves as being Irish people. I don't think they have a legitimate interest in the case of Unionists except insofar as they view those as electors of the British Government. They certainly have an interest with the Nationalist community and the major Nationalist party.

John Simpson: That sounds like a protector or a guarantor relationship that the Irish Government would have with the Nationalist community.

Lord Gowrie: Well, I don't think it works that way but what I have been talking about protection and guarantees, I was talking about a legitimate interest. If, certainly as some people argue forty percent of the population here broadly see themselves as Irish, obviously the Irish Government has a great interest just as the British Government has a great interest in the

majority of the community here and I go back to my earlier point. All sensible people know that the community on the ground and in Belfast ..... must be apex of the triangular relationship of which the bases are the sovereign Governments in the Republic and at Westminster. We have sought to try and create a process ..... and now I think we must also attend to an improvement in the relationships with the base of the triangle.



John Simpson: Well, do you see now the ground being ready for the creation of the parliamentary level, the parliamentary tier of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council?

Lord Gowrie: Parliaments are funny creatures as are Assemblies. They are very independent and they don't easily take instructions from the executive even if the executive, as in our countries, grows out of the Parliament and therefore what parliaments elect to do is not really for me to say.

John Simpson: Well, are Governments prepared to give a lead. Are they prepared now to accede to pressures which might lead to the setting up of that parliamentary tier?

Lord Gowrie: I would certainly say that the Government would be highly responsive to the view of parliamentary institutions which reflect the need for a political settlement in a relationship, a set of relationships which are permanent within the island, which have created terrible conflict in recent years and which ordinary people want to see put an end to. Unemployment and basically the economic issues are major concerns with all other Governments but really the issue in Northern Ireland has been allowed deteriorate for too long. It's not good for the people who live here, it's not good for the Republic who have been very stretched in terms of their resources on security issues - lost tourism and business investment as a result of it - and it's very bad for the British Government and really it's high time we concentrated on this issue and gave it a major priority.

John Simpson: Well, of course the scope of economic cooperation has been developed and there have been talks on pipelines and other forms of cross-border cooperation but I think the political pressure point comes when there is a suggestion that the Dublin Government may find a method of discussing Northern Ireland's internal political affairs, if that is the phrase to use. Can you give the Unionists the assurance that the Dublin through these institutions will not be talking about Northern Ireland's internal political affairs?



Lord Gowrie: Well, obviously I can't give an assurance what any Dublin Government will do but what I believe to be crucial is for the British Government and the Government in the Republic to recognise the permanence, and I stress that, word, the permanence of the union but I think that before Unionists throw their hats in the air..... must recognise that such a recognition could really only be deep-seated and achieved and therefore, permanent if Unionists recognised that the Dublin Government has a legitimate interest in the affairs of the Nationalist community.

John Simpson: One final area in the question, in terms of the relationship between the countries. The United Kingdom and Ireland are both members of the European Community. Now, has the European Community not got a role .....

Lord Gowrie: ..... a very great shock in the international economy and that therefore the political role has been understated as people have been wrangling about a deteriorating share of the economic cake. Now, I would hope that towards the end of the century that this will ease up and I certainly think that the triangular relationship exists within a circle which is Europe and I certainly think Europe has a role to play and I regret the breakdown of ..... and I would hope that we would all see.....

John Simpson: Lord Gowrie, one final point, You've been in the Northern Ireland Office now for 16 months. You I think enjoy political life. Do you think you'll be here figuratively to speak to us on the same issues on 1 January 1984.

Lord Gowrie: Well, one way or another I'll be here because I come from Ireland and I've no intention of leaving it.

Press Section

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